1703

Liberty

NOT THE DAUGHTER BUT THE MOTHER OF ORDER — PROUDHON

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"For always in thine eyes, O Liberty!
Shines that high light whereby the world is saved;
And though thou slay us, we will trust in thee."

JOHN HAY.

"Why Government At All?"

Mr. William H. Van Ornum introduces his book on the title-page as "A Philosophical Examination of the Principles of Human Government, Involving the Analysis of the Constituents of Society, and a Consideration of the Principles and Purposes of all Human Association." In his preface he tells us that in 1891 he conceived a scheme of agitation which he was sure would, if properly presented, force the whole social question to the front and bring relief to those urgently needing it. He then arrived at the conclusion that it was possible to effect a reconciliation between the State Socialists and the Single Taxers, the Anarchists and the State Socialists, the farmers and organized operatives, and he determined to undertake a solution of the perplexing problems which confronted him. He further tells us that he has labored under a serious disadvantage, in not being able to obtain proper criticism at the time when criticism might have been helpful. Only when the book was finished and needed nothing but final revision did Mr. Van Ornum succeed in procuring criticism. Among the critics to whom the author is indebted for many valuable suggestions are a certain George J. Schilling, William Holmes, our comrade Westrup, and others. It is a pity Mr. Van Ornum failed to obtain the coöperation of our friend George J. Schilling, who, I doubt not, would have put the author under great obligation for many negative and perhaps a few positive hints, and safeguarded him against some harsh and well-deserved censure.

Mr. Van Ornum has a very high opinion of his own achievement. He firmly believes that he has explored a new field, or, at least, that he has explored the familiar field in a new way. I cannot share this view. With the exception of the so-called Plan of relief, which must certainly have occurred to hundreds of reformers, but which has doubtless been dismissed by everybody except Mr. Van Ornum as something which never can be needful and which would be impracticable if it were needful, — with the exception of the great Plan, I say, the book contains nothing new or remarkable or striking. Mr. Van Ornum may claim that he advances new arguments in favor of well-known views, or that he offers new objections to the systems of certain writers. Perhaps he does; but if new arguments and objections are feeble, inconclusive, superficial, and colorless, the question of originality or priority has no interest for anybody. Certain it is that Mr Van Ornum's book cannot fairly be described as a scientific or philosophical contribution to the discussion of the problems it deals with. Mr. Van Ornum is doubtless sometimes right, but generally the reasons which he gives for his position are not such as would carry much weight with thinking people. I need hardly add that, when Mr. Van Ornum is the reverse of right, there is absolutely no danger of anybody being misled by his weak and vapid argumentation into an endorsement of his errors. Anarchists cannot congratulate themselves on this addition to their literature, and the opponents of Anarchism will not feel greatly disturbed over the matter, as their side has not been seriously threatened by Mr. Van Ornum. If one listens to what he promises, he seems formidable indeed, but, when one examines the actual performance, there is nothing substantial to reckon with.

Since my verdict is so adverse to Mr. Van Ornum (indeed, I regard his book as not far above the Kelso production), it may be well to remark that in this case no feeling of exultation accompanies the passing of sentence. Mr. Van Ornum means well, and one wishes it were possible to bestow honest praise on the work. It is somewhat irritating, to be sure, to read the inflated sentences in which Mr. Van Ornum indulges in extravagant and ridiculous talk about his "system," "plan," "inquiry," "analysis," etc. Mr. Van Ornum ought to know that he is no system-builder, no philosopher, no discoverer, no profound thinker; and his absurd pretensions tempt one to be severe with him. In his "Introduction," for instance, he declares that "as yet the study of social questions has not been pushed far enough to reconcile the apparent contradictions which separate the different schools of thought," and intimates that he expects to traverse the whole distance required. Yet elsewhere he confesses (rather superfluously, the fact being too glaring to escape observation) that he has not been able to make such an exhaustive examination of the works of the prominent authors he criticises — Marx, Proudhon, etc. — as would qualify him for an elaborate and comprehensive review of their respective systems. And, in point of fact, Mr. Van Ornum's method of "reviewing" an author is delightfully simple and easy. He quotes a few sentences, points out some alleged fallacy in them, and rests his case against the victim. There is no attempt to show that the theories attacked are so fundamental as to involve the entire system; it is sufficient for Mr. Van Ornum's purpose to disagree with *something* an author says. I shall give presently samples of this style of "reviewing"; here I wish to make sure that the reader realizes the exact nature of the task which Mr. Van Ornum imagines he has accomplished. Be it remembered, then, that Mr. Van Ornum, moved by the belief that "the fact that there are so many and such conflicting schools of thought, each offering different remedies for the same evils, remedies which require elaborate explanations to describe and a subtile mind coupled with extensive knowledge to comprehend, is conclusive evidence that previous analyses have not been carried far enough," starts out to bring about a general reconciliation, not by urging any compromising of differences, but by eliminating the respective errors and bringing out the harmonies between the respective truths of the divergent schools. He sets out to "explore the route, examine and compare the charts, possibly correct them, survey the intervening country, note its characteristics and the difficulties to be overcome, calculate the distance, and blaze the way to the utopia." In other words, Mr. Van Ornum expects, by convincing the different schools of the truth of his own position, to *convert* them, to induce them to relinquish their respective errors and unite on a Van Ornum platform free from all error. Either he expects this, or there is nothing for him to do, since he fails to coincide with any existing school, pretending to perceive vices in each. Why, then, does he use the timid expression "*possibly* correct them"? Is he beginning to wonder at his own audacity, and shrink from the presumptuous task? We cannot accept this single modest reservation; it is out of place, out of congruity with the rest. No, Mr. Van Ornum seeks to show us all wherein we err, and convert us to something new. We shall see how he does it.

The first man Mr. Van Ornum reviews and seeks to correct, convert, and bring into line is Mr. George. I am not likely to be accused of partiality for Georgeism; but I am free to say a less intelligent review of Mr. George's theories than Mr. Van Ornum's I have not chanced upon. Mr. George gets nine pages, and the chief criticisms are on his views of interest, rent, and capital. The subject of interest is disposed of in three short paragraphs, where we naturally expect to find, first, a clear statement of Mr. George's position, and, next, a refutation of that position. Mr. George is asked a few trivial questions, and then simply *told* that interest is the result of government restriction of the amount of evidences of credit issued. Mr. Van Ornum holds that under free banking and note-issuing interest would disappear; but he does not justify his belief by any demonstration. Is this the way to correct or convert an opponent? Mr. Van Ornum further objects to Mr. George's claim that capital, as one of the factors in production, is entitled to a share in the product, his ground being that there is no such thing as capital in the sense of something that exists independently of land and labor. It is admitted, of course, that we may speak of the tools and appliances used by the producer as capital; but this admission is fatal. Mr. George will concede, in general, that there is no such thing in nature as capital in the sense of something existing independently of land and labor; what is important to him is that for a particular producer there *is* such a thing as capital, — tools, etc., — existing independently of land, which he may have, and labor, which he may procure in the market or furnish himself. A man may have land and labor-power without being able to undertake production, — that is, he may lack capital, or tools, appliances, etc. Suppose, now, he obtains this capital from another; ought he to pay for its use? George says yes, for capital is evidently a factor. Mr. Van Ornum says no, not because capital is not a factor, but because, under a free-money system, the factor capital would bring no reward. But, as Mr. Van Ornum is incapable of defending this view, how does he expect to bring George to a realizing sense of error?

To rent no less than three paragraphs are devoted. That no share of the produce should go to rent, Mr. Van Ornum thinks he can show conclusively simply by pointing out that land does not ask for any share. The landlords, he says, ask for a share; hence, if you abolish landlordism, and make land free, there would be no rent. But there would be land-occupiers and land-cultivators, and could not some of them ask and obtain a share for the land, not necessarily from tenants, but from the purchasers of their products; in other words, is there not such a thing as economic rent? Mr. Van Ornum thinks there isn't, and fancies that Carey somehow disproved the Ricardian theory of rent. Of course those who understand economics know better. It does not matter to the rent-theory whether the better or the worse lands are first taken up for use; as long as differences of soil or location exist, there will be rent, according to that theory. In the chapter on the single tax Mr. Van Ornum recurs to the subject and tries to prove that economic rent does not exist. But he exhibits such an utter unfamiliarity with the subject of rent in the pure economic sense that it would be a waste of space to consider his allegations.

It will be readily inferred that Mr. Van Ornum's objections to the single tax are not very weighty. The criticisms are mostly verbal and based on quibbles or misapprehension. Of the more substantial ones (relatively speaking), we will take two, one economic or theoretical, the other of a practical nature. Disputing the claim of the Single Taxers that a tax on land-values cannot be shifted, Mr. Van Ornum writes: "Suppose the single tax in full operation, and I have paid the tax for a location on which to do business, what do I do with that account? Do I not charge it up to expense; and, like all other items in the expense account, do I not add it to the cost of the goods produced, and do not those who buy the goods pay for it? Of course!" How stupid the Single Taxers are, not to have anticipated such an argument! But possibly the fault is not with them. Mr. Van Ornum should have inquired who fixes the price of the goods produced by different men on *different* soils and locations. If those who pay little or no rent, those who have the poorer soils or lots, then the taxation of the economic rent of their competitors, more favorably situated, will not enable the latter to add the rent to the price. Their profit, or wages, will simply be less than it would be if they were not interfered with. It is futile to criticise the proposition to tax economic rent without a knowledge of its implication and significance. Mr. Van Ornum's practical objection to the single tax is that the poor farmer and starving laborer cannot find much relief in the reflection that in the dim future a single-tax legislature will abolish all taxes save the small one on land values. In the first place, this misrepresents the position of the Single Taxers. It is not the mere abolition of the other taxes that they look forward to; for the general diffusion of prosperity they rely on the indirect effect of the plan on production, the labor market, etc. When you indulge in such *practical* criticisms, you are bound to assume that all they claim is certain to follow the adoption of their plan. If they are correct in their prognostications, they have a much stronger case than Mr. Van Ornum. It is certainly easier to obtain the single tax than to abolish all rent, interest, profits, taxes, and government by the Great Plan advocated by Mr. Van Ornum. Those who want immediate, positive relief would act wisely in joining the Single Taxers in a body, assuming the single-tax plan and Mr. Van Ornum's Plan to be the only alternatives.

The next thinker "reviewed" by our author is Marx. Marx is too abstruse and profound for Mr. Van Ornum, and there is not a criticism which would not be dissipated by a mere grasp of Marx's meaning. In the first place, Mr. Van Ornum has completely failed to master the surplus-value theory. Referring to Marx, he says: "Observing that a commodity requiring a given number of hours' or days' labor to produce it does not always exchange equally for another commodity into which the same amount of labor has entered, and which he therefore regards as of equal labor value, he calls that difference profit, or surplus value." Marx doesn't do anything of the kind. He distinctly argues that, whether equivalents or non-equivalents are exchanged, surplus value does not arise. If non-equivalents are exchanged, then one commodity-seller simply over-

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Liberty.

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"In abolishing rent and interest, the last vestiges of old-time slavery, the Revolution abolishes at one stroke the sword of the executioner, the seal of the magistrate, the club of the policeman, the gauge of the exciseman, the erasing-knife of the department clerk, all those insignia of Politics, which young Liberty grinds beneath her heel."—PROUDHON.

Announcement.

Till further notice Liberty will be published monthly instead of weekly. The size will remain the same, and the subscription price will be fifty cents a year. All subscribers now on the books will receive the full number of issues for which they have paid. That is to say, if a subscriber, for instance, is entitled to eighteen more issues, he will receive eighteen monthly issues instead of eighteen weekly issues. The department devoted to The Sociological Index will be discontinued. Outstanding coupons will be redeemed either in articles already catalogued or in extension of subscription to Liberty, at the option of the holder.

It is with great reluctance that I make this change. But it is absolutely necessary. Personal reverses force me for some time to come — many months certainly, perhaps years — to devote all my earnings and nearly all my time to the fulfilment of obligations which I have accumulated in the last dozen years. If it were not that by giving a little time each day to type-setting I can set up Liberty monthly without employing a compositor (thus reducing the actual outlay of money to the cost of paper, press-work, and postage, which receipts from subscriptions will pay), I should be unable to continue Liberty at all. But fortunately I am a printer, and, this being the case, it is likely that Liberty will live in some form as long as I have health and strength. The next number will appear about the first of August.

Subscribers will be allowed, as heretofore, the privilege of buying books and stationery, and subscribing for other periodicals, at wholesale prices.

T.

Not Murderers, But Murdered.

For ever the world rolls round and round,
And the genial seasons run,
And ever the truth comes uppermost,
And ever is justice done.

Or, if not ever, at least sometimes; and, if not completely, then partially. For has not Governor Altgeld fulfilled the expectations which Liberty announced immediately after his election, by setting free the living martyrs of 1887, — Fielden, Schwab, and Neebe? Yes; and thus has performed an act of magnificent, if somewhat tardy, justice. It is the bravest act standing to the credit of a politician since Horace Greeley bailed Jefferson Davis.

In one respect, in fact, Governor Altgeld has *much more* than met my expectations, for never had I dared to hope that he would send these injured men back into the world with the word INNOCENT stamped unmistakably upon their foreheads, and still less had I looked to see him place the official brand of MURDERER upon the brows of Gary, Grinnell, Bonfield, and all the members of their miserable gang. But this is precisely what he does in the seventeen thousand words which give his blow its crushing force, and which might fittingly be condensed to four for an inscription on the monument at Waldheim above the graves of Spies, Parsons, Engel, Fischer, and Lingg. Room should be straightway found upon that marble for the words, *Not Murderers, but Murdered*, followed by the graven signature of the governor of Illinois. By this verdict a partial justice, the utmost now possible, is done, not alone to the living, but to the dead.

In one respect, however, I have been somewhat disappointed. This act of justice is not as timely as it might have been. Justice is injustice, to the extent that it is delayed. No amount of sophistry can obscure this plain truth. The New York "Herald's" comment on the pardon is that it is strange that it should have taken the governor six months to find all this out. Of course I am aware that, if the governor had acted more promptly, the "Herald" in its perversity would have accused him of exhibiting an unseemly haste. But condemnation on that score could easily have been met, whereas to the actual criticism there is no valid answer. If it was an outrage for Judge Gary to send innocent men to prison for life, then it was an outrage for Governor Altgeld to keep them in prison for six months. Any argument good against the one is good against the other. I point this out, however, only to draw the true lesson of the hour. It is not my desire or purpose to find fault with Governor Altgeld. Whatever may be the debit side of his account, the balance to his credit is overwhelming and can never be wiped out. He has done nobly. And his shall be our gratitude and all the glory forever.

T.

A Chance to Test the Right to Boycott.

An interesting phase of the controversy over Sunday opening of the World's Fair is its relation to the boycott principle. The Sabbatarians, who are mostly the declared enemies of the boycott, have made the boycott their chosen weapon against Sunday opening. The United States Government was the first to apply the boycott on a large scale by making its grant of $2,500,000 conditional on Sunday closing. The Directory has apparently decided to meet this move by taking the money, spending it all, and then forfeiting the grant and inviting Congress to recover it out of an empty cash-box.

Beaten here and in the courts, the last hope of the Sunday-closers is in declaring that they will not attend the Fair at all if it is open on Sunday. This movement, started more than a year ago by the Ohio Christian Endeavor Union, has been attracting much attention within a few weeks. Of course, the daily press has been crying out loudly against the wickedness of boycotting, and the religious press has been twisting itself into various amusing shapes in trying to show that it is "not a boycott," because no threats of violence are used, or because the staying away is not generally done by command of an organization, or for some other equally pertinent reason. Meanwhile there is a fair probability that the International Christian Endeavor Convention, held at Montreal, July 5–9, representing a constituency of one and a half million members and a good many more friends, will commit itself pretty definitely to the boycott policy.

Is the Christian world, then, beginning to understand that the boycott rather than the policeman's club is the natural, convenient, and civilized remedy against non-invasive social offences? Well, hardly. Most of these people will go right on declaring that the boycott is tyrannical and un-American, and that they will never countenance such a thing. But a few of them at least will get their ideas cleared, and many will be able to see the analogy to their own action when an orderly boycott for good cause next comes before the public eye. At any rate, the result of this movement must be more or less in favor of the liberty of the boycott; and whatever such influence it does exert will be put just where it is most needed.

It would wonderfully help to make the situation understood if a Christian Endeavor Society or two should be prosecuted under the anti-boycott laws. I am a member of that Society myself, and an enemy of those laws; but the educational value of bringing them into such contact would be so great that I am not sure but I shall begin praying for it to happen.

STEPHEN T. BYINGTON.

The Fools and the Philistines.

When the New York "Sun" goes gunning for the "scalp" of Mrs. Mary E. Lease, it is generally provocative of amusement; for, when the "Sun" returns from the chase, the cirrigerous occipital adornment of the far-famed priestess and prophetess of Populism does not always dangle at its belt. A late ebullition of vituperation by the "Sun" against Mrs. Lease was called forth by a speech which the latter recently made, somewhere in her native wilds, upon the millennium that is to be ushered in when the government becomes the owner and operator of the railroads, telegraphs, and all "public improvements," which consummation, she gently informs us, is but one short century hence. But in making the date 1993 she has overlooked an opportunity to do humanity a great service: she might have added another decade to the time and thus have prevented its being *fin-de-siècle*. This oversight of hers is unpardonable.

Mrs. Lease's many vagaries are certainly sufficient excuse for some ridicule on the part of the "Sun," and doubtless every person (with the exception of Prof. Joseph Rodes Buchanan and the fair lady herself) will be ready to forgive the "Sun" its pastime after reading the following from the prophetic soul of Mrs. Lease:

> Where Chicago now lifts her proud spires and many-storied buildings, a great lake or inland sea will surge its restless waters, and the dwellers on its banks will tell with bated breath of the cataclysm that engulfed the city and rolled the waters upon its sin and pride.

Now this is the slaver of drivelling idiocy, and if it were all that Mrs. Lease had said about the good time coming, I should have left her to the tender mercies of the "Sun" and said good riddance; for certainly such pious emulation of the late Col. Shepard is a fit subject for nothing but sport, and that of the merriest kind. But this is *not* all. She waxes scientific. She sets a pace for science that causes it to grow faint and footsore in the race. She has called upon it to furnish an ethereal extract of the

"life-force now found in the heart of the corn, the kernel of the wheat, the luscious juice of the fruits." Why not? Science has condensed and concentrated milk, the most potent "life-force," at a certain stage of life, in the universe, perhaps; it has produced for us the essence of almost everything under the sun: why should it not give us *the* essence? There is no reason why. I join with Mrs. Lease in the demand. Let us have this quintessence of food; let us cease to be the slaves of servants and *chefs*. The business man who now wastes an hour at luncheon could drink from his flask without leaving his desk; the laboring man could go to work without his dinner pail. It would shorten the hours of labor; it would increase wages, because it would lessen the cost of living; it would reduce rents, because less room would be needed, owing to the abolition of the paraphernalia of housekeeping.

But the women — the women — what *would* the women do? No more afternoon teas, no more dinners, no more use for china, plate, and table linen; what would be left in life worth living? It is clear that Mrs. Lease, whose lot is cast among the politicians, whose daily life commingles with the stern affairs of State, and whose husband remains at home with the children, had never thought of this. If she had, I doubt if she would ever have allowed herself to say what is recorded here:

> A small phial of this life from the fertile bosom of Mother Earth will furnish man with subsistence for days, and thus the problems of cooks and cooking will be solved. The slaughter of animals, the appetite for flesh meat that has left the world reeking with blood, and bestialized humanity, will be one of the shuddering horrors of the past. Slaughter houses, butcher shops, and cattle pens will be converted into conservatories and beds of bloom.

The "Sun" laughs at this. It grows boisterously hilarious. It joyfully seizes upon the opportunity to flash the scintillations of its wit upon the late agricultural efforts of Uncle Jerry Rusk, and even does not spare the urbane and painstaking J. Sterling Morton. But all this is by the way. It wishes to divert attention from the real issue, which is such an alteration of our social and economic system as will give to the producer his full product. The desire for this alteration Mrs. Lease and I hold in common; it is upon the question of methods and means that we differ. She relies upon government, while I renounce it; she temporizes with the church, while I oppose it; she would monopolize monopoly, while I would abolish it; and she would enlarge the State, while I would ignore and dispense with it.

This epitome of Mrs. Lease's scheme of reform is necessary to prepare the reader for the following quotation. Taken by itself, as it appeared in the "Sun" with no accompanying indication of her vicious idea of a government-legal-tender-fiat currency, it sounds very Anarchistic. Indeed, it is Anarchistic; it is an eloquent and forcible indictment of the monometallists, of the gold-bugs, of the parasites that fatten on the cupidity of labor. The conclusion that it is sound is irresistible. Just read:

> That superstition of a darker past, that fetich taught by selfish partisans and college-bred idiots, that gold should be the basis of money, will disappear before the full knowledge of the fact that a gold basis for a monetary system was a trick of the money breeders to make money scarce and dear and flesh and blood cheap.

Before this sentence from her philippic the "Sun" is helpless. If it had taken the trouble to explain that her substitute for a gold basis is simply a Federal fiat, it could have made out a good case against her from its standpoint; but it passes her utterance by with a careless and disdainful wave of the hand, ignoring the fact that its case is given away to the Anarchists unless Mrs. Lease's charge is refuted in the abstract, and overlooking the further fact that printing this sentence without the explanation that Mrs. Lease believes in greenbacks does by no means prove that her assertion carries with it no weight. However, since the paragraph as it stands is unanswerable, the "Sun" is not to be blamed for not wishing to face the music. But this is no excuse for its attempting to cover up its inability and utter helplessness with a lot of nonsensical criticisms of the possibilities of science. Why should it provoke laughter to assert that the application of electricity to agriculture will revolutionize that branch of production? What is there so uproariously funny in the remark that three hours will be regarded as a long day's work? Must we infer that the "Sun" is delighted to know that some people are now forced to toil from eight to sixteen hours a day in order to avoid starvation? If my Philistine contemporary believes in working "long hours," it should by all means be permitted to do so, and I should be the last one to wish it to be prohibited from the exercise of that unquestionable right; but is that any reason why I should allow to go unrebuked this ridiculing of the idea that under equitable economic conditions it would be unnecessary for any one to labor more than three hours a day? I think not. I think that the ambition to shorten the hours of labor is a laudable one. I share it.

But when all has been said and done there is little to choose between the "Sun" and Mrs. Lease. The one is rocky, the other shallow; the one is crafty, the other silly; although it would seem that, while it is far from accurate to designate the contest as one of diamond cut diamond, it still is uncivil to term it one of dog eat dog. Yet, I am sure, Anarchists can be content to permit monopolistic despotism and well-meaning tyranny to demolish each other, for liberty has use for neither of them. C. L. S.

The Republican papers cry in unison that Altgeld, in pardoning Fielden, Schwab, and Neebe, is keeping a political promise made to secure his election. Bosh! The charge is absurd on its face. Such a promise could have been kept by a simple pardon on the ground of mercy, and a pardon thus granted would have had the weight of public opinion in its favor. But Altgeld properly and emphatically repudiates the idea that mercy is the basis of his act. He places himself squarely upon justice, declaring that the prisoners were never guilty, and thus he brings down upon his head the condemnation even of his own party. This is not the way in which politicians keep their promises.

Mr. Yarros's excellent review of Van Ornum's "Why Government At All?" appears in small type only because its length made it impossible to print it editorially. The review gives more attention to the book than it really merits, but, in view of the author's extraordinary claims, it was thought best to examine them with some thoroughness, especially as his friends have been clamorous for Liberty's opinion and have been carrying chips on their shoulders ever since the book appeared.

Our German comrade, John Henry Mackay, the author of "The Anarchists," is about to pay a visit to the United States. He will reach New York early in August. I am sure that this news will delight his many American admirers.

"Why Government At All?"

(Continued from page 1.)

reaches another commodity-seller. Marx regards the commodity-sellers as a whole, as a group, and the wage-laborers also as a whole. Surplus value arises from the relation between these two antagonistic groups. Surplus value is the difference between what a capitalist pays for his product and what he gets for it. The person to whom he sells it may get an equivalent; and yet both will derive profit from the exchange, the reason being that both are employers and exploiters of labors.

Misunderstanding the use of the word circulation in the phrase, "circulation, or exchange of commodities, begets no value," Mr. Van Ornum tries to score a point by showing that merchants or traders, who perform the labor of "circulation," add by their labor to the value of the product and are entitled to fees. But this is just what Marx has been urging — that labor alone adds value to a product, and that mere act of exchange does not create any value.

Finally Mr. Van Ornum quarrels with Marx for affirming that "some crippling of body and mind" is inseparable from division of labor, and dilates on the incalculable benefits due to division of labor. These benefits, however, Marx never denied; he merely pointed out that there was another side to the question, a dark side. Proudhon has done this in a superior and more elaborate way, and, as Mr. Van Ornum claims to have read the "Economical Contradictions," I may refer him to the chapter on the division of labor in that work, and advise him to re-read it before again venturing to discuss the subject.

After Marx, comes Bellamy. The criticisms are too shallow and the points selected of no moment. So, passing this chapter over, we come to that on "The Fallacies of P. J. Proudhon and His School."

Mr. Van Ornum has only read "What Is Property?" and the first volume of the "Contradictions." To the "Contradictions" we are not referred at all, Mr. Van Ornum merely intimating that it was rather foolish on the part of Proudhon to write that work. Had not Proudhon failed to "understand the importance" of "the effect of law" in violating the necessary condition of property, possession, "he would not have considered it necessary to devote a work of upwards of 500 pages, like his 'Economic Contradictions' [By the way, the "Contradictions" comprise *two* volumes, each of about 500 pages, a fact of which our author seems to be, strangely enough, entirely unaware.], to the consideration of contradictions growing out of an institution [property] which is artificial and transitory in its nature." This philosophic observation shows that Mr. Van Ornum has not the remotest notion of Proudhon's position on the question of property. Proudhon did *not* hold that property is an artificial and transitory institution, and that political economy would disappear together with it. He pointed out the contradictions of the existing industrial organization by way of preparing the ground for the solid foundation of a new industrial organization, of which private property was to be a permanent part and feature. For the science of political economy he also saw a future, and he endeavored to winnow the errors from the economic teaching of his time and to vindicate its truths. Proudhon never countenanced the silly notion of the weak-minded reformers that political economy and property are things to be abhorred and forsaken.

But even if we assume that property and political economy *are* doomed, how nonsensical it is to pretend that the "Contradictions" are a waste of energy! Are property and political economy so feeble, unpopular, and demoralized that no critical attacks on them are profitable? Have they had a short and precarious tenure, and, supposing they have to go, is it not advisable to hasten their departure by well-aimed thrusts? Mr. Van Ornum is manifestly ignorant of the whole subject of evolution. A thousand years to him are like unto a single day, and his wish is father to his thought. Fortunately, property and political economy have come to stay, and Proudhon has done a great deal to insure their stability and importance by separating the accidental and fallacious from the permanent and true.

Proudhon, according to Mr. Van Ornum, discussed social questions without first obtaining a clear knowledge of man himself in his individual character. The charge is absurd, of course, and conceived in ignorance of Proudhon. The only "proof" offered is in the shape of a few extracts from "What Is Property?" in which Proudhon advocates State Socialistic methods of reform. On this same evidence is based the further charge that Proudhon subordinated the individual to society, and implied that the individual exists for society. The truth is that Proudhon, as a matter of expediency, was led into the advocacy of authoritarian measures. His position as leader of a workingmen's movement, his political career, and his active nature are responsible for the inconsistencies between some of his practical efforts and his theories. Mr. Van Ornum becomes highly diverting when he undertakes to correct Proudhon on the nature and import of liberty, the sovereignty of the individual, etc. Proudhon never

mistook authoritarian measures for libertarian measures; he sought to use authority in the interest of liberty, being anxious to afford immediate relief to the proletariat. His methods were not always those of liberty, and criticism upon his *practical* course is warranted. But only ignorance can jump at the conclusion that he was confused in his conceptions. Mr. Van Ornum's talk about his alleged exclusive use of the deductive method is perfectly childish, and the rest of his criticisms are on a par with this. He simply resorts to the familiar trick of State Socialists in quoting a few well-known passages and erecting "estimates" of Proudhon on the strength of their authoritarianism. But such critics remain wholly ignorant of Proudhon's system, views, and achievements, and there is nothing to do but advise them to study further and judge intelligently.

After noting the "fallacies" of Proudhon, Mr. Van Ornum turns to those of his school. Of this, later.

Such, then, is Mr. Van Ornum's way of correcting and converting thinkers who, though great, are not as penetrating and profound as their critic. No compromises are suggested; the errors of Mr. Van Ornum's opponents are now so apparent that everybody must be anxious for the promised reconciliation and reconstruction. Sharing this anxiety, I proceed to examine more closely the new philosophy and gospel.

Passing over several "reviews" and "expositions," let us look into the chapter on property. Did not space forbid, this would be the proper place to comment on Mr. Van Ornum's views on the motive of human action and the objects of human life, views presented in two short chapters and alluded to in the chapter of recapitulation as follows: "The attempts that have heretofore been made to generalize social facts . . . have failed because men have not properly studied and understood these facts. They have studied society as such instead of resolving it into its integral parts. . . . Their methods have been deductive instead of inductive. . . . On the other hand, I have sought the key to a right understanding of the facts, in the study of man as an individual." Our author manifestly lacks the sense of honor. Not having been born great, and being in no danger of having greatness thrust upon him, he has determined to "claim everything" and adopt the style of certain advertisers, who describe the poorest article they sell as surpassing, incomparable, unique, etc. Mr. Van Ornum has nothing new to say, and the old things he restates are said in a manner so unattractive as to tempt those who really agree with him to repudiate them; yet in spite of this, or perhaps because of this, Mr. Van Ornum persists in proclaiming himself a pioneer, a leader, a great intellectual discoverer. He will pardon us if we are forced both by deductive and inductive reasoning to laugh at his pretensions.

Now, then, for property. Mr. Van Ornum finds this one of the easiest matters to handle. There is, he says, legal property and natural property. Legal property being the parent of many evils, he would abolish it totally, and seek in nature the right principles of property. "Natural property is what would be recognized as property even if human law were entirely abolished. Examining the subject, we find three conditions necessary; the first is the person, because there can be no possession without a possessor; second, the thing or object which is possessed, and third, the condition of possession, — that is, occupation." In Mr. Van Ornum's opinion, the violation of the third condition is "the key to the whole monstrous injustice of property rights." "By conferring upon the possessors of property the right to part with that property and still own it, — that is, hold a mortgage lien or encumbrance upon it, and then attempting to enforce that ownership, it [what?] leads directly to slavery, subjection, resistance, strife, crime, misery, brutality." [No wonder Mr. Van Ornum misses Marx's point as to surplus value.] Most of our misery is simply due to the fact that people can own things they do not actually possess. The question is not whether a man *rightfully* owns a thing; even if one is the actual producer of the thing owned, he should cease to be recognized as its owner as soon as he parts with it, — say lends it to a friend. "Debt," according to Mr. Van Ornum, "is one form of slavery." It is perfectly absurd to insist upon men's paying their debts. "Does any one question the fact," continues our author, by way of clinching the argument, "that these inequalities, oppressions, and disorders arise solely from the law? Imagine then the law abolished, and who is there that would allow himself to be evicted for non payment of rent? Who would submit to being sold out by the sheriff to satisfy a mortgage or a judgment of the court? But the court would have to go with the law; so there would be no court to give judgment." How simple!

Unfortunately, Mr. Van Ornum has neither induction nor deduction on the side of his allegation that ownership without possession is the key to the injustice of the present system. The key is exploitation through various monopolies, — ownership without a rightful title. Men who part with what really belongs to them should be able to recover it, if such an understanding exists when the bargain is made. The thing to prevent is robbery, legal and illegal.

Now about this "natural" property. What evidence is there for the assertion that under this "natural" system oppression of one man by another would be impossible? How would aggression be prevented? Mr. Van Ornum assures us that there wouldn't be any aggression, — that all would cheerfully respect "natural" property and dwell in peace and harmony. But we decline to accept his assurances. Human nature does not justify it. The men and women we know would continue to invade, even if the law and the courts should be wiped out. The law and the courts are responsible for much of the invasion, but not for all of it.

Not only is Mr. Van Ornum's "natural" property "unnatural", it is also unjust. And the only criterion to apply is that of justice, for, to be plain, all this talk about "natural" property is humbug unadulterated. The world has seen many forms of property, and all were equally natural from the only correct point of view, — that of evolution. The distinction is not between law and nature, but between law and justice, between legality and ethics. Are our present property laws consonant with the principles evolved by ethical science; are they in accord with equal freedom? This is the only pertinent and intelligent question. There is lack of congruity and correspondence between the ethical principles of property and the legal principles of the same, and the aim and endeavor of rational reformers should be to teach men the true ethical laws of property and to secure recognition of such laws. If anybody considers ethical property "unnatural" and attempts to overthrow it, he does so at the risk of being treated as a criminal. It is perfectly "natural" for men to punish aggression, and against this natural desire ethics has nothing to say. But the trouble is that it also appears to be "natural" to the men and women of today to seek to punish non-aggressive, right action, and against this ethics protests. Progress consists in harmonizing the nature of men with their ethical ideals, in adapting them to a civilized condition.

Mr. Van Ornum predicts that Communism will be the logical outcome of his natural property. Perhaps so; but luckily "natural" property has not the shadow of a chance. What the outcome of ethical property will be, I don't really know, and speculation on the subject would be idle. One thing is certain, — the world will long remain satisfied with just forms of property, — forms compatible with equal freedom.

Mr. Van Ornum's confusion on the question of property is the direct consequence of his irrational conception of liberty. The words liberty and justice are found on every page of the book, but there are no definite meanings in the author's mind corresponding to these terms. The chapter on liberty alone convicts Mr. Van Ornum of philosophical incapacity and superficiality. After some superfluous criticisms of Mill's inadequate notion of liberty (superfluous to all familiar with the treatment of Mill by Spencer and others), the Anarchistic and Individualistic view is adverted to as follows: "It is a common expression now among professed lovers of liberty that 'men should be free, only their freedom must be bounded by the equal freedom of every other man.' Then, if men immure themselves in narrow cloisters, they must be content, because the freedom of each is bounded by the equal freedom of every other one." Let me restate the principle of equal freedom and see whether the illustration applies. Liberty in society means that every man should be free to do whatsoever he wills, — to exercise all his powers and faculties, — provided in the doing thereof he does not infringe upon the equal freedom of any other man. In other words, man should enjoy the greatest liberty compatible with equality of liberty. Manifestly this principle applies to men in society, at large, not to men immured in cloisters. Those who so immure themselves do *not* enjoy the greatest liberty possible in society, and Mr. Van Ornum's use of this inept illustration shows his failure to grasp the meaning of the term equal-liberty. People do not desire to immure themselves; they insist on being free and active, and the question is as to proper limits upon this activity. If one man is *perfectly* free, if one man have *unlimited* liberty, some other man must have his liberty unduly limited. Shall a man be so free as to be permitted to kill or injure another man? If so, what becomes of the freedom of that other man?

Since, however, Mr. Van Ornum rejects our conception of liberty as too mean, let us inquire what his conception is. "Who is it," he cries, "that thus places bounds to human thought [?] and human activity? Not so! [*Sic.*] I would instead place man upon the mountain top of his sublimest possibilities, bounded by nothing but the sweep of his own powers. I would bid him trace back the chain of causation, link by link through all the past, explore the present in its infinity, and boldly soar on the wings of his imagination through the eons of eternity. He should delve deep into all mysteries, bring up the hidden treasures of earth and sea, traverse limitless space, weigh suns and stars, and measure constellations, pluck God himself from off his golden throne, consign him to the lumber-room of forgotten myths, and seat himself upon his vacant throne, the master of earth and air and skies. This is liberty; all-absorbing, all-embracing liberty."

Wretched as this rhetoric is, let the poor reader think of the thought, or absence of thought, it contains! I positively swear — no, I affirm, being an infidel — that we are at the end of the chapter and get no more enlightenment on the subject of Mr. Van Ornum's conception of liberty. Be it remembered that there is nothing vague or dubious about his negative position; he emphatically states that he has no use for liberty which is bounded by the equal liberty of every other man. But when we come to his positive declaration, all is dark and wretched and irrelevant. His conception of liberty would leave man free to measure constellations and weigh stars and evict God, we learn; but the doctrine of equal freedom places no interdicts on these enterprises, and hence the grounds of Mr. Van Ornum's displeasure are not apparent. Why are we not told whether Mr. Van Ornum's liberty would allow one man to kill or injure or rob another? This would be to the point, and would at once bring out the difference between the two views.

It is futile for Mr. Van Ornum to protest that under complete freedom men would not aggress. He must tell us in the abstract what liberty and aggression *mean*, and what the limits of individual liberty are. Equal freedom guides men in their mutual relations, and tells them what they may and may not do in their daily lives. Mr. Van Ornum's liberty of measuring gods and evicting constellations — beg pardon, evicting gods and measuring constellations — does not tell me whether my liberty entitles me to invade the sphere of a fellow-man.

Enough, however, about liberty. I only wish to add that the foregoing enables us to appreciate the exceptions which, in the chapter on Proudhon, are taken by our author to the views of Proudhon's school. Proudhon's disciples, it is declared, have avoided most of his mistakes, and are open to blame only in their treatment of crime, which treatment arises "from their failure to comprehend fully the essential dignity of man, and to see that, with perfect liberty, there can be no crime, because there will be absolutely no motive to commit crime." The question, though, is not whether crime will persist or not, but what crime *is*. To define liberty is to define crime, by implication; and conversely. Mr. Van Ornum defines neither. The definitions would be fatal to his philosophy.

After talking about us, Mr. Van Ornum talks at us for a while. "Liberty admits of no qualification," he says. Liberty, we reply, is qualified by equality of liberty. "It means without restrictions." It means without any other restrictions than those imposed necessarily by the *social* condition, by the presence of other men, equally free. "There cannot be '*no* government' and still *some* government." True; but there can be "no government" and still protection against aggression and crime, which isn't government at all, — at least as Proudhon's school defines government.

But it is time to come to the consideration of the Great Plan of Relief. The reader knows that Mr. Van Ornum's only desideratum is the abolition of the law, which in his view involves the abolition of all crime, exploitation, injustice, and oppression. How, then, is the law to be abolished? "The plan of action is simply the withholding of taxes; not the refusal at first to *pay* taxes, but the refusal to *appropriate* them. . . . Taxes to the government machine are like steam to an engine. Without them the machine is powerless. All that is necessary is to combine and elect a majority of *one house*, to do nothing." Let one house refuse to appropriate money for the government machine, and government is abolished at one stroke. Courts, police, army, are helpless, reduced to the necessity of earning, severally, their living in some honest way.

This, then, is the great and original Plan which, according to Mr. Van Ornum, renders it possible for State Socialists, Single Taxers, Anarchists, Communists, trade-unionists, and all other reformers to co-operate and fuse. Need I say, after my exhaustive analysis of the method of reconciliation, that this pretence is without the slenderest foundation? Mr. Van Ornum leaves the various reform bodies just where he found them. He hasn't reconciled them, and the differences that prevented their harmonious coöperation before prevent it still. Take the Single Taxers. How can they work with Mr. Van Ornum, seeing that they insist on the taxation of economic rent as a matter of equity as well as necessity? Are they convinced by Mr. Van Ornum's argumentation that economic rent would disappear under his system of land tenure? Not if they are men capable of forming convictions. Then they still believe in taking rent, which implies a governmental machine, which, in turn, makes the Great Plan obnoxious to them. Or take the out-and-out Georgeite who believes in interest. Not being convinced that interest is unjust, how can he work for a Plan which makes the enforcement of a contract involving interest impossible? How can Marx and Bellamy Socialists join Mr. Van Ornum, believing as they still do that private ownership of means of production is the parent of exploitation? Not being converted to Mr. Van Ornum's views, they cannot aid to abolish the State. In a word, the Great Plan is only practicable on the assumption that all reformers accept Mr. Van Ornum's conclusions. As they do not, the plan is useless.

It only remains to be added that, even if Mr. Van Ornum should ever succeed in converting all reform schools to his views, the great plan would be wholly unnecessary. A party strong enough to elect a majority of one house would be strong enough to effect its object without the paraphernalia of an election. It could abolish government by withholding taxes. The presence of such a party implies the presence of a mass of passive sympathizers, and a still greater mass of interested on-lookers. Under such circumstances the refusal of such an army of men to pay taxes would demoralize the governmental machine.

However, this is a mere matter of detail. There is nothing novel about the plan. Let a large number of men determine to abolish government, and they will find a way to do it. Mr. Van Ornum started out to reconcile differing reformers, eliminate the errors in current systems, and afford a synthetic social philosophy. He has failed. He has merely expressed certain vague notions in an uncertain way, and has made an appeal for peace and harmony when peace and harmony are impossible. I cannot congratulate Mr. Van Ornum on his first book. Even when he is right, he is superficial, weak, and insipid; and he is not generally even right.

V. Y.